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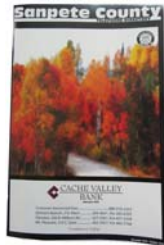
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Dustin Zeeman is wearing his Scout bandalo sporting 142 merit badges, all the merit badges the Scouts offer. He is holding his Order of the Arrow sash signifying admission to the Scout honor society.

Centerfield Scout earns every merit badge – all 142 of them

Robert Stevens
Managing editor
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CENTERFIELD—Many 18-year-olds have a few trophies, awards or even a high school letter signifying their accomplishments. But few have anything approaching what Dustin Zeeman has.

The son of Dee and Beverly Zeeman, Dustin recently became the first Boy Scout in the Arapeen District to earn all possible merit badge—at this time 142.

“I am not aware of another Scout that has done this in the Arapeen District,” said Jay Zabriskie, communications director for the district, which encompasses Sanpete, Sevier and Wayne counties and the Fillmore area in Millard County.

Merit badges can be earned in a broad range of subjects ranging from sports, crafts and science to trades, business and future careers

Dustin said it’s been quite a journey since he was originally motivated by his then-Scout master Matt Reber of Axtell, who promised his 13-year-old Scouts a rifle if they earned all of the merit badges.

Dustin ended up receiving a rifle from his parents when he got his Eagle award. The butt contains a round metal piece showing the Boy Scout shield. The housing around the trigger is silver and is engraved with various slogans, such one saying “Once an Eagle, always an Eagle.”

“I think he’s very dedicated,” his Venturing adviser Brad Worch said of Dustin. “Getting them all is an achievement. He’s a good young man.”

Dustin said the process of obtaining all those merit badges has been worth it.

“It helped me mature and get a better understanding of what real life is going to be like,” he said. “It has also helped a lot in developing leadership abilities.”

Dustin said his friends think “it’s a cool accomplishment.” But the path he has traveled to reach this point has been mainly on his own, with a hand from his mom, Beverly.

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“I have to give my mom quite a bit of credit. She helped keep me going,” Dustin said. In fact, when Dustin was a Cub Scout, Beverly was his Cub master.

Beverly said Dustin has always been “a really easy-going great kid, willing to help people” and easily made the transition to rural life when the family moved to Centerfield in 2006. Dustin is actually Canadian, having been born in Lethbridge, Alberta where his mom is from.

As a young Scout, Dustin started out going to merit badge pow-wows, which enabled him to earn three merit badges in three weeks. But as time went on, it became more difficult to find classes for the merit badges he wanted. He said he often had to search all over Sanpete, Sevier and even Utah counties to find merit badge counselors.

With one in particular, Oceanography, the Zeemans just couldn’t find anyone. So his mom signed up to be the counselor. Dustin completed the requirements for that merit badge at Scofield Lake.

His favorite merit badge was Aviation where he got to fly a plane, thanks to the generosity of a pilot at an air show held at Mt. Pleasant Airport in 2010.

Dustin said his most difficult merit badge was “sustainability.” The requirements weren’t that difficult, he said, but there was a lack of knowledge in the Boy Scout community about the requirements.

“I had to take three different classes to get that one,” he said. One class had 20 Scouts in it, but none of them got the badge, he said, because it turned out there was a requirement nobody involved with the class was aware of.

Along the way, he also earned his Eagle Scout award. For his Eagle project, he built two solar dehydrators for an Arizona Hopi Indian reservation.

During this time, Dustin didn’t just earn merit badges—he also shared his knowledge as a merit badge counselor at Camp TIFIE, the big Scout camp east of Mt. Pleasant, for two years, something he really enjoyed.

He said one of his funniest teaching experiences was when he taught the radio merit badge and sent Scouts on a scavenger hunt to track down a signal. The thing he didn’t tell the Scouts was that he had put the beacon in the camel pack of another Scout and instruct him to run around camp.

“There were times when I’d see that kid pass by three or four times, and they wouldn’t even know it. That was funny,” he said.

Currently, Dustin, who is a member of Venturing crew 1389 and the Order of the Arrow (the Boy Scout national honor society), is completing high school online and expects to graduate in December. After that, he plans to go to school in Arizona to become a diesel mechanic.

He hopes to stay involved in Scouts and to possibly serve as an adult Scout leader down the road.

“I’ve gone through so many Scout masters and different Scout leaders,” he said, giving particular praise to those who, he said, were really involved. “I’d prefer to be like them, to help and motivate the kids and give them a reason to come to Scouts.”

Generally, he has high praise for the merit badge program but said he would really like to see it become more hands-on.

“Most people are hands-on learners like me,” he said. “It’s easier to pay attention when you’re actually doing things than if you’re just in a classroom listening to people talk.”